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S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

O L D J E W R Y,

On the FOURTH of NOVEMBER, 1788,

BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR COMMEMO-
RATING THE GLORIOUS

R E V O L U T I O N ;

Being the Completion of an Hundred Years
since that great Event.

By ANDREW KIPPIS, D.D. F.R.S. AND S.A.

L O N D O N :

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M DCC LXXXVIII.



TO THE
COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY
FOR COMMEMORATING THE
GLORIOUS REVOLUTION,

AT WHOSE UNANIMOUS REQUEST THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE WAS PREACHED,

AND TO
THAT SOCIETY AT LARGE,

IN CONSEQUENCE OF WHOSE UNANIMOUS REQUEST IT IS PUBLISHED,

THIS DISCOURSE
IS WITH GREAT GRATITUDE AND RESPECT
INSCRIBED,

BY THEIR MOST OBLIGED
AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

ANDREW KIPPIS.

TO THE

COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY

FOR COMMEMORATING THE

GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

AT WHOSE UNANIMOUS REQUEST THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE WAS DELIVERED

AND TO

THAT SOCIETY AND LARGE

ASSEMBLY OF PEOPLE

WERE PRESENT

ON THE 11TH OF

SEPTEMBER 1776

BY

THE REV. DR. JOSEPH

WATSON

ANDREW KIRK

S E R M O N
ON THE
REVOLUTION.

PSALM cxliv. 15.

**HAPPY IS THAT PEOPLE THAT IS IN SUCH A
CASE; YEA, HAPPY IS THAT PEOPLE WHOSE
GOD IS THE LORD.**

IT hath frequently been the advice of religious writers to private Christians, that they should keep an account of the more remarkable instances, whether personal or domestic, of the Divine Goodness; and make them, at stated seasons, the matter of particular devotion and thankfulness. The advantage proposed from such a practice is, that, by its
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tendency to preserve in the mind a lively remembrance of benefits received, a foundation would be laid for rendering perpetual that warmth of gratitude, and that activity of piety and virtue, which the mercies of the Supreme Being should always produce.

That a similar conduct is equally proper, with respect to the blessings which, as a nation, we derive from the Governor of the World, will scarcely be denied by any rational understanding. For, by this means, we not only offer to Jehovah the praises which his mighty favours justly demand of us, but maintain alive that high value for our privileges, and those general principles concerning them, which may help to continue them amongst us, and to transmit them to posterity. Hence it has always appeared to me of considerable importance to commemorate, by suitable acts of worship, those signal events which have distinguished the early part of November in the annals of our country. The Revolution of 1688, in particular, constitutes the most illustrious æra in the civil history of Britain; and it has wisely
been

been celebrated from year to year, by several religious societies, and several political associations. With regard to myself, if I may be permitted, on this great occasion, to mention my own conduct; I have endeavoured, for more than forty years, in the different situations wherein Providence hath placed me, to excite in my hearers a devout improvement of the eminent deliverances with which the British nations have been favoured.

It is the natural effect of a long course of time to weaken, and almost to obliterate, the impressions which remarkable transactions, and providential interpositions, at first make upon us, and which it is desirable to be for ever retained. To preserve, therefore, the continuance of these impressions, to renew, to strengthen, to confirm them, it is the dictate of wisdom and virtue to lay hold of the seasons and circumstances which are favourable to purposes so salutary and useful. Such an opportunity is presented to us this day. It is now a century since the Revolution took place. A century is a period of years of great consequence in the chrono-

logical calculations of most civilized nations ; and the completion of a century hath often been appropriated to the recollection of illustrious events, by extraordinary festivals and celebrations.

In conformity to sentiments so natural and so reasonable, we are now assembled together ; and it cannot but be a subject of pleasing reflection, that the spirit by which we are actuated hath gone through the nation. This or the succeeding day will be consecrated in different parts of the kingdom, and in different quarters of the metropolis, to the memory of our great Deliverer, and of the blessings which by him were restored, confirmed, and added to the British islands. In the zeal of these various societies, for the sacred cause of Liberty, we sincerely rejoice ; and we affectionately concur with them in the endeavour of promoting, by religious, civil, and social acts, the genuine principles of Whiggism and of the English Constitution.

With respect to the occasion of the words which have been chosen as introductory to the

the following discourse, it may be observed, that they stand at the conclusion of a warm and affectionate prayer which the Psalmist hath poured out for the welfare of his country. After enumerating several circumstances in which national felicity consists, such as peace, plenty, and a large number of flourishing inhabitants, he adds, "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

You will naturally suppose that it is not my design to consider this passage at all in its original application, but only to adopt it as a proper motto to some remarks upon the Revolution; in the prosecution of which I shall endeavour to shew,

First; That the Revolution was a most happy event to Great Britain; and,

Secondly, Deduce a few practical observations from the subject.

That the Revolution was, indeed, a most

happy event, will appear, in the first place, if we advert to the calamities from which we were at that time delivered. Perhaps there had not been, since the Reformation, a juncture more threatening to the Protestant cause, than the state of things in Europe from the year 1685 to the year 1689. The King of England was a bigotted adherent to the See of Rome; the Palatinate had fallen into the possession of a Roman Catholic family; the edict of Nantz was revoked; the Duke of Savoy had done the same with regard to the privileges granted by his father to the Vaudois; and Lewis the Fourteenth of France had arrived to the summit of his pride, power, and grandeur. With daring insolence he had broken the strictest treaties, had trampled on the most sacred obligations, had invaded the territories of his neighbours, had been successful in many of his ambitious projects, and had still greater schemes in view. In this situation of affairs, Europe trembled for her freedom, and for the security of her religion. With anxious eyes she looked around her for a Deliverer:

Deliverer: and such a Deliverer Providence had for some time been preparing in the bosom of the United Provinces; a Deliverer who had been trained up to a fitness for heroic deeds in the salutary school of adversity; and who had displayed, in early life, his wisdom and his valour in the salvation of his own country.

If we direct our prospect to the condition of these kingdoms at the period in question, we shall find that it was truly deplorable. The conduct of the reigning prince was compounded of the meanness of superstition, and the madness of enthusiasm. From education and acquired principle, a determined foe to the rights of mankind, both civil and sacred, he precipitated into every step which might accomplish our ruin. No sooner was he seated on the throne, than he levied the customs contrary to law. He procured a set of venal Judges, caused them to assert his dispensing power, and openly declared for a standing army. This army, together with the militia, he put, in a great measure, into the hands of such persons as were expressly excluded by

the constitution. An indulgence was proclaimed to tender consciences ; a thing in itself most just and reasonable, and the idea of which is too dear to my heart, ever to speak of it, in any form, with the language of disapprobation. But, in the present case, it was rendered odious to the public by an apprehension of its having proceeded from insidious designs ; by its wanting the sanction of law ; and by the imprisonment of the Bishops, for remonstrating against the illegal authority on which it was founded. But it is not my intention to enlarge on King James's proceedings, which stand conspicuously prominent on the page of all our histories. Let it suffice to say, that we were threatened with the loss of that noble plan of government, which had been derived to us from our ancestors, and obtained through a long series of difficulties, struggles, and dangers.

But it was not arbitrary power alone that was coming upon us. No ; Popery likewise was advancing in all its deformity and horror. An ecclesiastical commission was erected,
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which partook of the nature and spirit of the Inquisition. The bigots of Rome were obtruded upon the universities. Into the hands of men of the same character were several of the counties entrusted. A Jesuit was admitted into the privy council; a Nuncio from the Pope was solemnly received; and an Ambassador was sent from England to reconcile the kingdom to the Roman See. Every thing announced the return of those dreadful days, when ignorance, superstition, and bigotry over-shadowed and disgraced the land. If James the Second had gone on without control, words would not easily be able to express the miseries into which we should have fallen. What could be more terrible, than to be deprived of the security, peace, and happiness, which arise from our excellent system of laws, and to groan under the chains of slavery? What could be more terrible, than to have the light of the Gospel taken away from us; to be debarred the sacred privilege of worshipping the Supreme Being according to the dictates of conscience; and to be obliged to submit either to the absurdities of Popery, or else to

suffer its severities? For, whatever changes a century may have produced in the dispositions of men of every religious profession, that, if Popery had become predominant, she would at that time have exercised her severities, cannot be doubted. In short, unless we should esteem it desirable to lose whatever can be regarded as dear and valuable; unless we should esteem it desirable to be robbed of the blessings which constitute our felicity, as men, Britons, and Protestants; unless we would be ready to give up the security of our properties and lives, the freedom of the mind, and the purity of the Christian religion;—we must acknowledge that the Revolution, on account of the calamities from which it delivered us, was one of the most illustrious and happy events recorded in civil history.

The same thing may be asserted concerning it, Secondly, if we consider the manner in which it was effected. This is a circumstance that cannot be reflected upon without peculiar pleasure. The mighty changes to which states and kingdoms are liable, have usually been attended with fatal desolations.

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Even where liberty has been established in consequence of public commotions and alterations, *that* liberty has, generally, been purchased at the expence of much devastation, and a great effusion of blood. If we peruse the transactions of ancient and modern times, we shall find, that it was only by the most dangerous conflicts that men have been able to secure the benefits of a free government. But revolutions have been much more frequently destructive, than favourable to liberty: and, indeed, the instances of this kind are so numerous, that it is painful to think of them. Where are now those boasted republics which we read of with so much delight, and which make such a distinguished figure in the records of past ages? Athens, Sparta, Thebes, Syracuse, and Carthage, are no more: and all the violent struggles of Pompey, Cato, and Brutus, while they brought infinite calamities on the Roman commonwealth, were wholly incapable of preserving it from ruin. With regard to modern kingdoms, the ancient privileges of the people have been wrested from the inhabitants of Spain, France, Flanders, Denmark,

mark, and Sweden; and the sovereigns of these countries have become absolute monarchs.

It is the glory of the signal event which we are this day commemorating, that, while the result of it was most favourable to liberty, it was conducted with an order and a tranquillity not a little surprising, and which cannot easily, if at all, be paralleled. The hearts of mankind concurred in it, even in contradiction to their professed principles and their former conduct; and it was a very happy circumstance, that King James should be induced to refuse the offer of assistance from France. So few lives were lost in England, that history scarcely deigns to take notice of them; and the crown was transferred to the heads of our noble Deliverers, William and Mary, without the risk or slaughter of a single battle. In Scotland, the contest was determined by one small engagement. The subsequent commotions in Ireland had, indeed, at first, an alarming and dangerous aspect; but they were soon concluded with victory and honour.

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I need not, surely, take any pains to shew, that the pacific accomplishment of so mighty and valuable an alteration in the state, was a considerable addition to its worth. A revolution productive of such beneficial consequences, would have been well gained, if it had been gained by vigorous contention, and the loss of numerous lives; if it had cost years of war, and some of the best blood of the nation. But the peaceful manner in which it was completed, rendered the blessing doubly delightful and happy.

Thirdly, The Revolution will appear to have been a most illustrious and important event, if we consider that it fixed the privileges of the subject, and the free form of the constitution, on a more firm and extensive foundation than they had ever stood upon before. Some ingenious men have gone farther, and have asserted that, in preceding ages, the frame of our government was entirely arbitrary; that we had no pretensions to liberty, till a little before the period of the civil wars; and that the settlement in 1688 was not solely the establishment and augmentation, but

but the proper era and commencement of English freedom. This, undoubtedly, is seemingly a high compliment to the Revolution. But I accept not of a compliment which is delivered at the expence of truth, and which, perhaps, has rather proceeded from a desire to exculpate the Stuarts, than from affection to the memory of William the Third. After having read the history of my country with attention, and, I trust, without much prejudice, I cannot but agree with those writers who have maintained that our government, though imperfect, though in some respects indigested, and not accurately and fully defined, was, nevertheless, in its essential constitution, originally free. The foundation of it may be perceived in Tacitus's Treatise on the Manners of the Germans; for, as Montesquieu observes, this beautiful system was invented first in the woods. From Germany it was transplanted into England by our Saxon ancestors, who established a form of administration which limited the prince, and required that public affairs should be settled by assemblies of the chief men of the nation. The privileges of the people

were increased by the alterations which the wise and virtuous Alfred introduced ; and his confirmation of the mode of trial by juries was one of the noblest advantages ever conferred on human society. Nor did the Norman conquest destroy our constitution, though it hindered its operation for a time, and gave occasion to the exercise of much tyranny. On the contrary, the English laws gradually recovered their vigour, and became the basis of the charter of Henry the First, of the celebrated Magna Charta in the reign of King John, and of other charters. How strong a sense Englishmen had of their legal right to liberty, is manifest from the numerous instances in which they demanded that the Great Charter should be solemnly confirmed. Even the feudal policy, however defective it may justly be esteemed, compared with the benefits we now enjoy, was formed on the principles of freedom, with respect to those persons who were possessed of landed property. There was, likewise, in that system a spirit of improvement ; so that it gradually gave way, and naturally brought in a better state of things, as society advanced towards perfection.

tion. The House of Commons rose out of it, by the introduction of representatives for the counties, and especially for the boroughs; which last, by acquiring wealth and power, obtained the feudal rights, and a share in the legislature. In succeeding times, the annals of our country will afford several instances in which parliaments have exerted such acts of authority as seem clearly to evince that the constitution was essentially free. The high privilege they legally assumed, and with little variation exercised, of being the sole imposers of taxes, is a most important circumstance in the history and evidence of English liberty.

If ever there was a period in which the kingdom might be supposed to have taken the form of an absolute monarchy, it was during the reigns of the Tudors: and it must be confessed, that the princes of that house raised their prerogative to a prodigious height, acquired an undue ascendancy over the grand council of the nation, and were guilty of very arbitrary proceedings. These circumstances, however, were not owing to the
people's

people's having given up their liberties; but to a peculiar concurrence of events, which enabled our sovereigns, at that time, to obtain and to exercise an illegal power. The depressed state of the Nobility, while the Commons were not sufficiently sensible of their strength; the unknown privileges, dignity, and weight, connected with the new character of the supreme head of the Church; together with other things, well explained in Bishop Hurd's ingenious and accurate political Dialogues, contributed to exalt the Tudors above their predecessors. Nevertheless, to begin with Henry the Seventh, the government under him was not so absolute as hath often been represented. No material alterations were made in the ancient constitution.—The king was under the necessity of having recourse to frequent parliaments; and his authority, when displayed with the greatest vigour, was still considered as subordinate to that of the national assembly. Even with regard to Henry the Eighth, who acquired such an enormous power, it may be said, that he so far respected the forms of the constitution as to rule

by parliaments. " It was by act of parliament that monasteries were suppressed ; that the authority of the Pope in England, together with the revenues which he drew from the kingdom, was abolished ; in short, that the ancient system of ecclesiastical government was overturned. In the numerous divorces procured by the sovereign, in the regulations that were made concerning the legitimacy of the children by his different wives, in the various and contradictory settlements of the crown, Henry never pretended to act by virtue of his own prerogative, but continually sheltered himself under the sanction of parliamentary establishment." The power of imposing taxes was uniformly exercised in the House of Commons ; and even when the statute was passed which gave to the king's proclamations the force of law, it was still the sanction of parliament that authorized the abominable murder of the constitution, though nothing could, of right, authorize such a murder. It was provided, likewise, by the same statute, that the royal proclamations should not be prejudicial to any person's

person's inheritance, offices, liberties, goods, chattels, or life*.

That the people of this kingdom retained a strong sense of their title to that freedom which had been so shamefully wrested from them, plainly appeared from the advantage which was taken in consequence of the minority of Edward the Sixth, to retrench all the late extensions of prerogative. "The very first year of this reign produced the repeal of that offensive statute, by which royal proclamations had, in any case, obtained the force of laws. Other innovations, which had proceeded from the extraordinary influence of Henry the Eighth, were, likewise, abolished; and, in a short time, the former constitution was completely restored †."

From the unbounded confidence which was placed in Queen Elizabeth, and from the frame of the government's not being, in some

* Millar's Historical View of the English Government, p. 524. 535, 536.

† Ibid. p. 538.

respects, ascertained and defined with sufficient accuracy, she was enabled to exercise several acts of very high and improper authority. But let it be remembered, that "with the legislative power of parliament she never interfered;" and that "the exclusive privilege of that assembly, in imposing taxes, was neither controverted by her, nor impaired*." That the government of England was not, at that time, understood to be an absolute but a limited monarchy, is apparent from the testimony of two persons in her own reign, eminent in rank, high in her majesty's favour, and fully equal to judge upon the subject. I mean John Aylmer, Bishop of London, and Sir Thomas Smith, a distinguished lawyer, and principal Secretary to the Queen. A like testimony had long before been given by Sir John Fortescue, Lord Chief Justice, and afterwards Chancellor, in the reign of Henry the Sixth. This illustrious magistrate, and well-informed writer, "instead of conceiving the English government to be an absolute monarchy, describes it in

* Millar's Historical View of the English Government, p. 540.

“ language that seems, in every respect, suitable to the present constitution *.”

* Biographia Britannica, vol. i. p. 393, second edition. Millar, ubi supra, p. 558—565.

I shall transcribe the passage from Bishop Aylmer. “ The regiment of England is not a mere *Monarchy*, as some for lack of consideration think; nor a mere *Oligarchy*, nor *Democracy*; but a mixed rule of all these: wherein each one of these have, or should have, like authority. The image whereof, and not the image, but the thing indeed, is to be seen in the Parliament-house; wherein you shall find these three estates: the King or Queen, which representeth the *Monarchy*; the Noblemen, which be the *Aristocracy*; and the Burgesses and Knights, the *Democracy*. The very same had Lacedæmonia, the noblest and best-governed city that ever was. They had their King, their Senate, and Hippagretes, which were for the people. As in Lacedæmonia none of these could make or break laws, orders for war or peace, or do any thing without the other; the King nothing without the Senate and Commons, nor either of them, or both, without the King (albeit the Senate and Ephori had greater authority than the King had); in like manner, if the Parliament use their privileges, the King can ordain nothing without them: if he do, it is his fault in usurping it, and their folly in permitting it. Wherefore, in my judgment, those that in King Henry’s days would not grant him, that proclamations should have the force of a statute, were good fathers of the country, and worthy commendation in defending their liberty.”

If we go on to the history of Charles the First, we shall find that the opposition to the measures of that mistaken and ill-fated monarch, and the proceedings against him, sprang from a conviction of his having violated the undoubted rights of his subjects. On this principle Sir Edward Coke, Sir John Eliott, Mr. Pym, and other patriots exerted themselves with so much vigour in the House of Commons. On this principle, the confirmation of the Petition of Right was strenuously insisted upon, and, on the part of the King, reluctantly granted. From this principle resulted the noble stand made by Hampden, and all the declarations and remonstrances of that time. To the same principle must be referred the opposition to the conduct of Charles the Second, and the glorious Revolution itself. The steps which were then taken to settle the state, were entirely founded upon the supposition that King James had exercised an unlawful power, had broken through the privileges of his people, and attempted to subvert the ancient government,

It is not, therefore, paying a real compliment

ment to the Revolution, to pretend that, before that era, the nation had no constitutional claim to the blessing of liberty. On the contrary, it is its excellence and glory, that it fully confirmed, and solidly established, the numerous advantages to which we had always been entitled, though the possession of them had been controlled by the tyrannical acts of our princes.

One point provided for, at the period I am speaking of, was the more certain security of our properties and persons. An appeal to our own feelings will instantly convince us, that this is a matter of high importance to the felicity of life. Wretched would be our condition, if our substance were precarious, and our bodies liable to be seized at the command of an arbitrary monarch. This was, however, too much the case under the Stuarts.—During the reign of Charles the First, taxes were imposed upon the subject without authority of parliament; the High Commission Court, and the Star Chamber, exacted illegal and enormous fines; and innocent men were condemned to cruel punishments.—Charles the Second shut up the Ex-
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chequer,

chequer, encouraged infamous and unjust accusations, and brought to execution by the most detestable measures, some of the worthiest patriots, which this or any other country has produced. As to James the Second, the short period of his government was little else than a violation of law, justice, reason, and humanity. But the illustrious settlement which began in 1688, gave firmness and vigour to the unalienable claims we possessed, of enjoying our properties in safety; of having our rights determined by the trial of fair and impartial juries; and of not being dragged to dungeons, to tortures, or to death, at the injunction of a tyrant.

Another thing established, at the same time, was the freedom of our political constitution. To be favoured with a form of government, of which liberty is the basis, is the greatest of all temporal blessings; and the nations on which so noble a gift has been bestowed, appear with peculiar glory in the history of the world. It has been the happiness of Britain to possess this benefit in a high degree of perfection. The system of our government is not singly a

democracy,

democracy, an aristocracy, or a monarchy, but an excellent composition of the three. It adopts the advantages of these several schemes, and rejects their inconveniencies: it assumes the equality of a democracy, without its confusion; the wisdom and moderation of an aristocracy in some respects, without its severity in others; and the vigour of a monarchy, without its tyranny: and it admirably provides for the distinct exercise of the judicial authority. Hence it presents a plan of power which produces more true freedom than, perhaps, has yet been enjoyed by any community, in any period; and this beautiful constitution the Revolution preserved, and secured to us, when it seemed on the verge of destruction.

The same happy event was highly favourable to our religious as well as to our civil government. As we are moral and immortal beings, it is of the utmost importance to be allowed the free exercise of those advantages that are calculated to promote our eternal welfare. The title we have to think for ourselves, and to follow the dictates of our
own

own understandings, is the unalienable prerogative of our nature. Our right to search the scriptures, and thence to deduce our sentiments, practice, and worship, we have an indispensable claim to, as Christians; and were we to be deprived of these benefits, we should be deprived of benefits, which are, of all others, the most valuable. Such was the bigotry of James the Second, that, notwithstanding his temporary indulgence, he would undoubtedly, if he had obtained the summit of his wishes, have robbed us of our reason, our Bible, and the power of acting according to our consciences. But by the interposition of William and Mary, we still continued to be favoured with the light that leads to heaven, and to enjoy the protestant religion in safety.

Thus was the Revolution one of the most illustrious and happy events recorded in history, if we consider it only as having preserved the privileges which the nation had heretofore possessed. But, beside this, it brought new ones, of the utmost value. It conferred additional rights on the subject; fixed ad-

ditional limitations on the crown; and provided additional security for the continuation of our felicity. The prerogative of the sovereign, which, in former reigns, had been made the instrument of so much oppression and tyranny, was reduced to just limits, and settled in a manner honourable to the king, and beneficial to the people. It was manifested that not what is called an indefeasible hereditary right was to give title to the imperial throne of Great Britain, but the appointment of the legislature, assembled in parliament; and a decisive blow was struck at the doctrine of non-resistance, and passive obedience.

At that period it was, likewise, enacted, that no one who is a papist, or who marries a ~~papist~~ *papist*, shall inherit the crown. *Dr. Pa*
Experience had shewn that the want of such a regulation had exposed the realm to numerous dangers and calamities; and, therefore, it must be regarded as having been an important security of the public welfare.

Then, also, it was that toleration, for the first

first time, received a legal sanction; and an end was put to the restraints, fines, imprisonments, and cruelties, which, for a series of years, had been inflicted on the Protestant Dissenters. It is true, that the toleration was far short of what the enlarged and philosophical principles, since embraced in the kingdom, would prescribe; and that the legal limits of it were very confined. Nevertheless, when we consider the temper of the preceding age, it was a glorious advantage gained in favour of the interests of truth and conscience, and the natural rights of mankind. It must, however, with regret be added, that the spirit of timidity and resentment procured penalties to be enacted against the Roman Catholic clergy, which were enormously severe (happily too severe to be carried into execution); and that, after some time, an act was passed, which, under the pretext of restraining blasphemy, interdicted that full discussion of all religious topics, which should be allowed in every free and enlightened country. It is no small honour to the reign of King George the Third, that it hath placed the toleration of the Protestant Dissenters on
a foun-

a foundation far more enlarged than that upon which it formerly subsisted ; and that it hath relaxed the severity of the statutes against the Papists. Perhaps, it may be reserved for the farther glory of this reign, to abolish all penal laws in matters of religion, and to put every man on the fair footing of being answerable to God only for his conscience, while he gives security for his civil allegiance, and his peaceable behaviour as a member of the community.

Another important object, which was taken care of at the Revolution, was the direction of the national revenue. A certain sum is set apart for the civil list ; the produce of all other taxes is distinguished from it ; and every tax is applied, by law, to its proper purposes. It is also wisely ordained, that certain taxes shall be renewed every year, by which means the annual holding of parliaments is become so necessary as to admit of no evasion. I should here have mentioned, with peculiar pleasure, the Triennial Bill, which was obtained in 1694, had it not been sacrificed, in the early part of King George the

the First's reign, to the alarms and terrors of government, by some honest and well-intentioned, but mistaken Whigs, who ought to have reflected that no principles of experience, no impending difficulties, could justify so manifest a breach of the constitution.

I might go on to specify a variety of additional circumstances; such as the allowance of counsel at their trials, to those who are accused of treason; the restoration of the Church of Scotland to her privileges, after a long persecution; and the re-establishment of the Protestant Interest in Ireland; though the two last events, however desirable and important in general, were far from being constructed on a sufficiently liberal foundation. But what I have already alleged will clearly prove that, by the accession of the Prince of Orange to the throne, our liberties were extended as well as preserved. The factions of men might, indeed, prevent some farther reformation, and retard the glorious effects which might otherwise have followed. But though more might possibly have been done, much was actually performed. A per-
fection

fection was attained by the constitution, that will be sought for in vain among the tumultuous and disorderly republics of Greece and Rome; a perfection no modern state can furnish; and which is, at once, the admiration and the envy of sensible foreigners.

It is likewise the peculiar honour of the Revolution, that it seized the happy opportunity of establishing and enlarging the privileges of the nation; while former opportunities, in appearance equally favourable, had been lost. The flame of Freedom burnt as brightly and rose as high during the civil wars as it had ever been known to do; and yet, through an unfortunate concurrence of events, nothing was transacted that was solid, effectual, and lasting. Nay, one daring man erected the edifice of slavery upon the very foundation of liberty. The great advantage, also, which the Restoration might have afforded, was neglected, through the folly and madness that had seized upon the minds of the people. The remains of the Feudal System were, indeed, done away; but, in other respects, the cause of Freedom

was

was sadly violated ; and it was not till late in Charles the Second's reign, that the Habeas Corpus act was completed. I must observe, once more,

Fourthly, That the Revolution will appear to have been a most happy event, if we reflect on its consequences. These consequences have not been confined to our own country alone, but have extended to Europe in general. Europe in general has not a little been indebted for its liberties to the settlement which took place under William the Third. Hence the cause of the Reformation was more effectually supported, the grand confederacy sustained, and the balance of power secured. Hence hath Great Britain been enabled to become the guardian of kingdoms, and to stand a mighty bulwark against the encroachments of the most formidable potentates.

But let us take a view of the state of things at home, and then we cannot fail of perceiving that the century which has passed since the Revolution has been the most delightful period

period the English history can produce. The Act of Settlement hath bestowed princes upon us, of amiable and worthy characters ; princes who have been lovers of mankind, and the real protectors of the privileges of their subjects ; princes who have not exerted those tyrannical stretches of authority which formerly disgraced our annals ; and under whom there hath been, with little interruption, a series of order, tranquillity, and happiness ; a succession of every blessing which can render human society, and human life desirable.

On the importance of agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, to the wealth, improvement, and happiness of a nation, I need not enlarge ; nor on the magnitude to which Great Britain, under the fostering influence of a free government, hath risen in these respects. Where shall we find the period in her history, in which blessings so valuable have been enjoyed in any such degree, as since the Revolution ? Agriculture hath been widely diffused and improved ; the variety and extent of our manufactures are beyond enumeration ;

tion ; and commerce spreads her sails to every part of the globe. To adopt the language of the sublime Prophet, " Our merchants are princes, and our traffickers the " honourable of the earth *."

The union of the two kingdoms of England and Scotland, which was accomplished in the reign of Queen Anne, was an event of high importance to the national prosperity.

If we next consider what has been the state of literature, it will appear that the arts and sciences have eminently flourished in the land. A just taste has been formed in polite learning. The Greek and the Roman writers have not been studied in vain ; and, by a variety of beautiful and excellent productions, it has been manifested that the genius of Britons is not exceeded by that of any other nation. In the more important branches of knowledge, we have not only endeavoured to emulate, but have actually excelled the ancients. Mathematics, natural

* Isaiah xxiii. 8.

philosophy, natural history, astronomy, experimental and chemical inquiries, have been carried to a high perfection, and have been applied to the most valuable purposes. The grand subject of government, the foundation, the just limits, the proper ends of political society were never so well understood. Ethics have been cultivated with great success, and explained with peculiar accuracy. Human reason has been improved, and human manners have acquired a civility, refinement, and mildness, to which the republics of antiquity were strangers, and which our remoter ancestors did not possess.

It must be added, that, from the glorious æra of 1688, to the present time, the best advantages have been afforded us for the knowledge and practice of piety and virtue. This is a circumstance of unspeakable importance. In consequence of that liberty of inquiry which has more fully taken place since the Revolution, natural religion has been better understood, and the Christian Revelation more solidly explained and defended. The attacks of its enemies have

given us to see that the Gospel stands on an unshaken basis; that in itself it is most excellent, noble, and divine; that it is the charter and assurance of eternal life. We have learned to distinguish the genuine doctrines of Christ from the inventions and corruptions of succeeding ages; and to seek for truth in the Scriptures alone, and not in human systems. It is permitted us to think, to judge, to act for ourselves: it is permitted us to search the Sacred Records with freedom, and to follow the instructions we derive from them: and every other advantage is enjoyed by us, in the way to supreme felicity.

It is earnestly to be wished that our conduct had been ~~responsible~~ to the light with which we have been favoured. But, though there is much cause for humiliation on this head, it is to be hoped that some good effects have been produced by our spiritual privileges. Moderation, charity, and humanity have increased; and designs for promoting both the present and the future welfare of the lower orders of the people, and for abolishing the infamous traffic in slaves, are

are embraced and prosecuted with ardour. The real votaries of religion are still, I trust, a numerous body; and those who are Christians indeed, are Christians on a rational and firm foundation.

I am not insensible that, during the century concerning which I have been treating, there have been instances of wrong and corrupt administration; that there have been adverse events; that there have been wars which have entailed a multitude of taxes, and an immense debt upon the public; and that there is room and cause for farther improvements in the constitution. But I will not introduce any shadows, clouds, or darkness, to obscure the sunshine of this day's festivity. I rejoice that Great Britain has been enabled to emerge so nobly from her successive difficulties, and that she still stands so high in the rank of nations. When every deduction is made, I ask; in what period we should rather have chosen to live than in that which hath succeeded the Revolution? In what period could we have enjoyed superior advantages of a personal, domestic, so-

cial, literary, philosophical and religious nature? The times of Alfred, and the Saxon monarchs, were times of darkness and confusion. In the victorious days of Edward the Third, and Henry the Fifth, ignorance and Popery prevailed; the land was uncivilized; and the common people were little better than slaves to the barons. Queen Elizabeth was, undoubtedly, one of the greatest princesses that ever existed. She governed the realm with wisdom and courage; protected the Protestant interest abroad; raised the honour and credit of the nation; advanced trade, and caused the kingdom to flourish. But yet these were only the beginnings of improvement. At the same time, she was often arbitrary in the management of affairs, and her treatment of parliaments. There were dangerous factions at home; persecution for conscience sake was not laid aside; and the followers of Essex were prosecuted with a rigour which, to a milder age, appears to be unaccountable. Learning, indeed, was cultivated; but the noblest subjects of knowledge, religion, and liberty, were, comparatively, but little understood.

On

On the whole, then, we shall with pleasure adhere to the testimony of Mr. Hume, who, in speaking of the æra which has been subsequent to the Revolution, hath made use of the following language. “ So long and so “ glorious a period no nation almost can boast “ of: nor is there another instance in the “ whole history of mankind, that so many “ millions of people have, during such a space “ of time, been held together, in a manner “ so free, so rational, and so suitable to the “ dignity of human nature *.”

What remains is the practical improvement of the subject. And,

First, The blessings with which we have been favoured should be thankfully ascribed to the Divine Goodness. “Happy people!” says the Psalmist, “that are in such a case; happy “ people! whose God is Jehovah.” It is here declared, that the prosperity of a nation is derived from the protection and kindness of the Supreme Being. Nor does this assertion ap-

* Hume's Essays and Treatises, vol. i. p. 517. Edition of 1777.

pear to be confined to the Mosaic theocracy, but is expressed in such general terms as may be applied to every kingdom under heaven. To adopt the words of St. Paul in another case: "Is Jehovah the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles*?" Yes, He is the God, the Father, and the Benefactor of all his rational offspring. By Him the world was created, and He continues to rule it by his unerring perfections. He is not an unconcerned spectator of human affairs, but directs them according to the dictates of his consummate wisdom, and his boundless benevolence. To Him we are alike indebted for the enjoyments of private life, and the benefits of public society. It was his will that men should unite together in social intercourse, and form themselves into distinct governments: and when governments are formed, their continuance or their alterations depend on his permission or appointment. He it is who "changeth the times and the seasons;" who "removeth kings, and setteth up kings†". Many events occur in history, that bear the visible marks of a divine interposition: and

* Romans iii. 29.

† Daniel ii. 21.

with

with regard to the Revolution, it was a deliverance so seasonable for Europe in general, and Great Britain in particular, that we may justly say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*." Let us then ascribe to God the glory which is his due; and ascribe it with that warmth of gratitude, which is so justly demanded of us by the magnitude of his mercies. With our hearts, and with our voices, should we unite in praising "Jehovah for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men†."

Secondly, It ought to be our earnest concern to make a religious and virtuous improvement of our advantages and privileges. There cannot be a stronger proof of a little and a base mind, than to be forgetful of those who have followed us with kindness, or to repay them with injury. Shall we then be ungrateful and disobedient to that God who is the greatest and the best of all beings, and who hath poured upon us in a rich and co-

* Matthew xxi. 42.

† Psalm cvii. 8.

pious stream of benevolence? Every ingenuous sentiment forbids so perverse a conduct. It is by mercy and by love that our heavenly Father calls us to the practice of piety and virtue. This is the common and ordinary method of his dealing with mankind. If we consult Him in the works of his creation, if we consult Him in the course of his providence, if we consult Him in the Gospel, we shall find that He chiefly addresses the nobler passions, and chooses to engage our hearts to righteousness, by the most affecting and beneficent obligations. An argument of the same kind is afforded by the Revolution. As we have been a people highly favoured by the Deity, we ought to be distinguished by our devotedness to his will. Moral and spiritual liberty, the emancipation of the mind from corrupt dispositions and habits, should accompany our civil and political freedom, and our religious advantages. What will signify our knowledge of Christianity, our enlarged and liberal views of divine truth, and the privilege we enjoy of worshipping the Supreme Being in the purest manner, if, at the same time, we are the slaves of iniquity? In
that

that case, our superior benefits will aggravate our guilt. But let me hope that better principles remain within us, and that we shall be persuaded, by the mighty deliverances we have received, “to consecrate our bodies, a
“living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,
“which is our reasonable service*.

Thirdly, We should cultivate a warm affection for our excellent constitution, and exert our best endeavours for its security, continuance, and improvement. Hath the Supreme Being favoured us with a system of laws most admirably adapted to the true freedom and dignity of the human mind? Hath he given us the everlasting Gospel in its genuine purity and excellence? Hath he called us to every rational, manly, moral, and spiritual enjoyment? Shall we not, then, entertain a high value for benefits like these? Not to entertain the highest value for them, would be stupidity and madness. We should hold in the utmost regard and veneration, the noble plan of power, the transcendent advan-

* Romans xii. 1.

tages that have been transmitted to us from our ancestors. The love of their country is a passion which hath burned with a bright and beautiful flame, in the most generous breasts that every land and age have produced. "If I forget thee," says a Psalmist, "O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her skill. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth *; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." The language of Cicero is: "Dear are our parents, dear our children, our relations, our friends; but our country alone is dearer than all these united; for which a good man would not scruple to die, if by so doing he could advance its welfare †." Nor is this the rant of a vain enthusiasm, but the language of truth, of reason, and of virtue. It is language which hath been ratified by the blood of some of the noblest spirits the world hath seen. The like affection should we cherish for the

* Psalm cxxxvii. 5, 6.

† Cicero de Officiis, Lib. i. Sect. 17.

favoured islands in which Providence hath placed our existence; and with regard to British liberty, it should ever be our wish and prayer, *esto perpetua*. But that it may be perpetual, it is necessary for us to do all which is in our power to secure its continuance; and to improve the blessings we enjoy. Perhaps it may be thought that individuals, in the common ranks of life, cannot perform much; but by all of us something may be done. We should, every one of us, in our several situations, endeavour to propagate the generous principles on which the Revolution was founded, and on which the present government subsists. Permit me to urge it upon those who are parents or guardians, or tutors, to furnish the minds of the young persons who are under their direction and influence, with proper sentiments of things. Unless a due attention be paid to this matter, it may justly be feared that the rising age will not sufficiently be sensible of the dangers that have threatened us, the deliverances we have received, and the felicity we possess; or sufficiently anxious to guard that felicity with unremitting vigilance
and

and zeal. Be it your concern, therefore, to inspire the breasts of ingenuous youth with an early regard for the Protestant religion, the rights of conscience, and the sacred interests of political and civil liberty. Set in order before them the numerous interpositions of Providence in our favour. Warm them with a veneration for the memory of King William the Third, with an attachment to the Hanover succession, and with affection to the mild princes of the Brunswick line. In short, let it be the object of your fervent solicitude, that the cause of liberal inquiry, of universal toleration, and of public and private freedom, may live and flourish, when yourselves are laid in the silent grave. This is a duty which is demanded of us, by the regard we have to our own honour, the happiness of our children, the welfare of posterity, and the prosperity and glory of our country. Yes, our country calls upon us never to forget so indispensable an obligation. "The God of Nature," she says, "hath separated me from the world, hath girt me with the sea, and hath held me out a great example of his goodness.

" He hath bestowed upon me natural advan-
 " tages of the highest importance. He hath
 " given me the noblest model of government ;
 " has rescued it from repeated perils ; and,
 " from age to age, has added to its improve-
 " ment. At length he has appeared for me
 " in a Revolution which is unparalleled in its
 " manner, and in its effects. He hath made
 " me the seat of genius, of science, of learn-
 " ing, of commerce, of law, of liberty, of
 " religion : and will you, my sons, suffer such
 " inestimable benefits to be wrested from
 " you ? Will you not piously transmit them to
 " your descendants ?" Our answer is, " We
 " will never suffer such inestimable benefits
 " to be wrested from us ; we will piously
 " transmit them to our descendants. British
 " liberty, by the blessing of the Supreme Ru-
 " ler upon our endeavours, shall be coeval
 " with the globe, and only cease at its final
 " dissolution." Amen.

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